

Part 5

Marriage: I Receive You

Matthew 1:19-25

All of us have areas where we tend to be very selfish in our marriage.

These are the areas that make us think we are not able to build oneness with our spouse.

This message focuses on how we accept the gift that God has given us and what that means.

Think about the last time that you received a gift that you really wanted.

You let it be known that if you received a gift like that it would really be appreciated.

Do you remember how you thought about the gift, planned how you would use it and the benefits you gained from it?

Then came the day when you actually got the gift.

Remember how excited and thankful you were?

Remember how you treasured the gift?

Okay keep this in mind as I share with you the rest of this message.

Remember the goal in our marriage is to make two into one. That is God's desire for us.

I. Differences

We are all different yet when we marry we are expected to merge two very different people into one – a partnership.

The first step in building the oneness is to receive our spouse.

This means we accept the differences that are between us.

We cannot fully receive our spouse if we do not accept what makes us both unique.

We are wired differently from our spouse and that needs to be understood and accepted in order for them to receive us.

Before I move on, I want to refresh your memory. Genesis 2:18 says *“The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for man to be alone, I will make a helper suitable for him.’”*

God knew and understood Adam and knew exactly what he needed.

Remember what Matthew 10:30 says? *“And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”*

Why is it important that you understand this?

If one should fall, we would say a hair fell out, But God would say, hair #134 fell out of Mike's head today.

That is how well He knows us – how well he knew Adam.

God was very capable of creating someone suitable for Adam.

So when He created Eve, He gave Adam a gift that was “suitable” for him – someone who would understand him and help him fulfill what God had called him to do.

God created someone who was suitable for Adam because He knew and understood Adam.

He did not make a replica of Adam.

If Adam just needed help to do the manual things in the Garden God could have created another man.

Adam needed more than that and God gave him a true partner.

When God brought Eve to Adam, Adam received and accepted her.

*If you marry the person that God chooses for you, then you know that this person has the potential to fully become suitable for you.

It does not happen overnight, but if the right choices are made, it can happen.

Do you know and understand how you are wired? Do you know and understand how your spouse is wired?

Have you considered the differences between the two of you?

Let me walk you through some opposites as an example.

As I go through these I want you to think which is you and which is your spouse.

It will not be uncommon for you and your spouse to share one.

For the kids, think about your parents and how you view them as well as how you view yourself.

A. Introverts and Extroverts

- Introverts: They think before they speak and usually say little.

They prefer a few close friends rather than many acquaintances.

- Extroverts: derive energy from interaction with people.

Enjoys working and playing on a team.

Usually has many friends and spends much of their time with others.

B. Sensors and Intuitives

- Sensors: Very practical.

Tend to base their reality on facts, facts and more facts.

They have their feet firmly planted in reality.

Giving little thought to what might have been or what may be in the future, they focus on what really happened or what is.

- Intuitives: Very innovative.
For them, what is can always be improved upon.
Their vague sense of dissatisfaction with reality propels them towards change.
The future intrigues them far more than the past or present.

C. Thinkers and Feelers

- Thinkers: They take a logical approach to life, preferring to let their heads rule.
They tend to be cool and calculated, cut and dried.
They concern themselves with right and wrong, with goals, with efficiency.
- Feelers: Prefer to let their hearts rule.
They feel deeply themselves and empathize easily with how others feel.
They tend to base their decisions on how their choices will affect others.

D. Initiators and Responders

- Initiators: Create ideas and action.
They are aggressive, assertive and willing to confront.
They tend to be outspoken, often talking loudly and quickly. Make decisions easily.
- Responders: Let other people's ideas and actions come their way.
They are less assertive and aggressive than initiators and avoid confrontations whenever possible.

As you heard me going through a few of the classifications of opposites (there are many more), were you able to identify yourself or your spouse?

Could you see how one could balance out the other, or how conflict could often arise because of different ways of doing things?

In a marriage conflicts arise because we do not really understand the basic makeup of our spouse. Once you factor in a little selfishness, then it really get difficult because now you have people who are not willing to accept their spouse because they themselves do not want to change.

So here is the beginning of conflict.

God's design for marriage is that the final result will be oneness between the two people.

In order for this to happen, each partner must receive his or her spouse.

Remember earlier when I had you reflect on receiving a gift that you wanted?

Now I want you to reflect on what drew you to your spouse or your potential spouse.

Remember when you were courting, past or present?

Remember how those little things that your loved one did that were so different from you and how you thought it were sooo cute, sooo interesting, sooo unique?

Well, after you are married, those same cute, interesting and unique behaviors became major irritants.

They were no longer cute, interesting although they remained unique.

Why does this happen?

Because when you were courting you accepted them as part of the overall package and now that you have the package, they become the bubble wrap that the package was wrapped in and therefore can be discarded.

This attitude towards the uniqueness of our spouse will never bring about oneness in the marriage because you never reach the point of fully receiving them.

It's sort of like God is standing there giving us a gift and we are telling God "I will only accept this gift if the following modifications are made to it."

Or we accept the gift and then we spend the rest of our lives trying to change the gift into what we want it to be.

Sometimes we get to the point where we know we cannot change the gift so we place the gift on the shelf. We now have no use for it.

We do this to a gift that we longed for and could not wait to get only to be disappointed.

It is a sad fact that there are marriages out there that have been placed on the shelf by one partner who no longer has any need for their marriage or their spouse.

But all is not lost. Things can change if we know what we need to do and if we pick up the tools in which to do it.

II. Receiving Your Spouse

How do we receive our spouse? Can we receive them if we have been married for 10, 15 or even 20 years?

What if things have gotten so bad that we have come to the point of just accepting that this is what we will have for the duration of our marriage?

Again I say all is not lost. It does not matter how long you have been married.

Only you know if you have truly received your spouse.

If you are willing, God can make the difference.

Here in Matthew is a very familiar story about receiving one's spouse.

Now you may say Joseph had no choice, but I beg to differ. Remember his heart?

Before the angel appeared to him, he had decided to put her away privately to spare her public

humiliation.

This demonstrated that he cared about her.

Under normal circumstances the man could have demanded that the woman be killed.

After he talked with the angel, he took her as his wife.

Now here is where it gets interesting. Because he was receiving everything about her, pregnancy and all, he was willing to wait to consummate the marriage until after Jesus was born.

He was also willing to accept the ridicule of family and friends for not putting Mary away.

Remember, even after Jesus was born many did not believe He was anything special which means that many probably thought Joseph was a fool for marrying someone who was “stained”.

All of these things Joseph agreed to accept when he received Mary.

He knew that she had not done anything wrong, she was the same person he had desired.

It did not matter to him what everyone else said – this was the gift that God was giving him and he received it gladly.

*You will not always know up front what you will get when you receive your spouse, but if you receive them and work towards the oneness, God has a way of working out the surprises.

Here are some basic steps that we can follow to receive our spouse.

- See them as a gift from God.

If you begin to see your spouse as a gift from God, two things will eventually happen.

You will know that God gave you what you needed and that your spouse is perfect for you – if you are willing to receive it.

James 1:16-17 says *“Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows”*

Although Joseph had planned to marry Mary, after the angel appeared to him, he understood just how special she was.

I believe in my heart that this understanding blessed him and he knew he had chosen very well.

She was his gift.

- Accept the fact that you need your spouse.

Our society now reinforces the theory that we do not need anyone.

If you elected to marry or if you desire marriage, then you must have some need that only having a spouse can fulfill.

Accept the fact that you need your spouse, and I am not just talking about for assistance with the “physical” things you do on a daily basis.

You need them on a much deeper emotional and spiritual level.

Doing this will increase your ability to appreciate them and ultimately receive who/what they are.

Some say that Joseph was much older than Mary and died before Christ started his ministry.

Whatever the case, Joseph knew that there was something about her that he needed in his life and was willing to deal with everything else to make that come true.

- Acknowledge your differences.

When you acknowledge your differences, you open the door to establish common ground.

You probably would not have married your spouse if you did not have some things in common.

Those common things are your foundations.

The things that you do not have in common become those things that you must merge into an acceptable harmony.

It does not mean that you give up who you are, but you find a way to make your uniqueness a strength for the relationship.

We do not know a lot about Joseph and Mary’s relationship, but we do know that he understood that she was different and that God had a special calling for her.

- Let your spouse in your personal space.

One of the definitions of “receive” is to “let in”, as in receiving a guest into your home.

Just as you must receive them, likewise they must receive you.

This can only happen when we invite them into our personal space.

This can be hard to do because you must let down your guard.

This will only become a reality when you reach a level of trust with your spouse.

- Understand the benefits of becoming one.

Oftentimes we will not strive for something if we cannot see its true benefit.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 really gives the benefit of creating oneness – in a natural way. It says, *“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”*

A cord of three strands is not easily broken.

God is in the midst of our marriage and His Spirit is one strand.

We make up the other two strands. Solomon says that a rope of three strands is not easily broken.

If our marriage does not have God in the midst, we are one strand short.

Where are you with receiving your spouse? Have you done that?

Receiving them is more than just accepting them.

You can accept a gift and never use it and put it on a shelf somewhere out of sight.

However, when you receive something, you choose to add value to it.

Have you received your spouse?

Do you understand your differences and yet still receive them with open arms?

When problems arise, do you receive them?

When you are angry, do you continue to receive them?

Today is the first day of the rest of your marriage. Receive your spouse.

If you are planning to marry, start now understanding your differences so that you will be able to know exactly what you are getting ready to receive.

Today can be the first day of a new relationship for each of you.